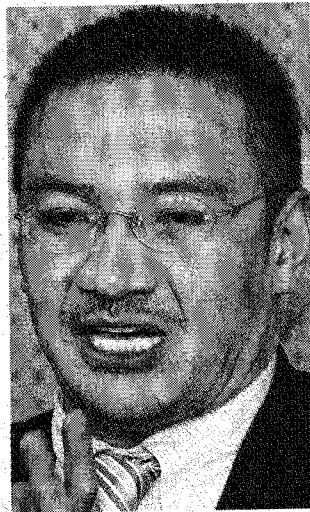


New hardship allowance for 'heroes'

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Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein says teachers and support staff will get benefits

PUTRAJAYA: Rural teachers, once described as "heroes" by the prime minister, now will get their rewards.

The government has approved the Education Ministry's request for a new hardship allowance and a once-a-year travel allowance to return home.

The amount of hardship allowance will be based on three classifications.

Teachers serving in Class I rural areas will receive a monthly allowance of RM500, those in Class II will receive RM1,000 and Class III, RM1,500.

Payment of the allowance begins this month and will benefit 15,499 teachers and 3,797 support staff in rural schools, Education Minister

Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein announced yesterday.

The government has allocated RM187 million a year for the allowance, which replaces the monthly incentive of 10 per cent of a rural teacher's monthly salary, regardless of where they serve.

However, for married couples who are both rural teachers or support staff, only one spouse can receive the hardship allowance while the other spouse will continue receiving the monthly incentive.

The ministry is in the process of determining the classification for rural areas according to criteria such as road accessibility, transportation risks, availability of water and electricity supply,

telecommunications, sanitation, health services, living quarters, and other amenities.

About RM2 million a year has been set aside for the travel allowance.

To qualify for this, teachers and support staff must have served at least six months in the interior. The allowance is also extended to their family members.

Hishammuddin announced the allowances yesterday after a meeting with 24 teachers' associations.

Next in the pipeline for the teaching profession is approval of the Super Headmaster's promotion scheme, similar to the Super Teachers and Super Principals scheme, whereby those promoted will

continue to remain as teachers in schools without having to move to administrative duties under the ministry.

Hishammuddin said the Public Service Department had approved the scheme in principle, which would benefit some 7,000 headmasters of primary schools.

"It is part of the 'moving up but not moving out' concept, to let teachers remain in the teaching profession while giving them recognition and promotions," he said.

Details of the scheme, once finalised by the PSD, would be announced, he added.

President of the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) Anuar Ibrahim said they were thankful for the new allowances.